the Corporation has been laying greater emphasis on developing non-canalized business of both exports and imports, making best use of its strengths such as finances, marketing skills and countrywide infrastructure. It has diversified into many new areas and also expanded operations in the areas earlier handled. In the liberalized environment, STC continues to play an important role as a trading arm of the Government, for bringing market equilibrium in terms of price correction, meeting shortages of mass consumption items and export of surplus commodities; the Corporation has been playing an important role in the implementation of inter Government treaties of trade, besides acting as a nodal agency to monitor and implement counter trade commitments/off-set obligations.

Terminal at Wagha border to facilitate trade

†973. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is setting up a terminal at Wagha border in order to facilitate trade with Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) in what way India will benefit by this terminal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) There is already a Land Customs Station (LCS) at Attari Road (Wagha Border) handling imports of dry/fresh fruits from Afghanistan *via* Pakistan. The same LCS can handle the trade with Pakistan.

(c) The trade with Pakistan through this station will cut short the period which is otherwise taken by other means of export *i.e.* through containers by sea or rail.

Issues to be raised by India in WTO conference at Hong Kong

974. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what are the preparations made by Government and what are the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

issues on which India is going to emphasise in the forthcoming Ministerial Conference of WTO at Hong Kong;

(b) whether there is a possibility of taking up these issues, apart from agriculture in the Ministerial meeting;

(c) if so, what are the possible issues that are going to be discussed;

(d) whether any consultations have been held with experts in connection with agriculture related aspects which are going to be placed before the Ministerial meeting; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) Government maintain an active dialogue with various stakeholders to develop India's positions on issues under negotiations at the WTO. To achieve our negotiating objectives, India has been making concerted efforts to develop common positions with other WTO members sharing similar concerns and interests.

The Sixth Ministerial Conference of the WTO scheduled to be held in Hong Kong, China from 13-18 December 2005 would, among other things, review the progress of ongoing negotiations launched under the Doha Work Programme and take appropriate decisions. The Doha Work Programme covers mainly negotiations in Agriculture, Services, Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), WTO Rules, Trade & Environment, Trade Facilitation and Development Issues.

The formal agenda of the Ministerial Conference at Hong Kong China remains to be finalized. However, it has been proposed by the Chairman of the WTO Trade Negotiations Committee that the Conference should aim to achieve substantial breakthrough on modalities in Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), a critical mass of market opening offers in services, substantial progress in Rules and Trade Facilitation and a proper reflection of development dimension in the negotiations.

India's approach and priorities in the Doha Work Programme are dictated by its national interest. In the agriculture negotiations, the concerns of the large Indian farming community remain paramount, particularly their food and livelihood security concerns and rural development needs, as also our objective of achieving effective market access in goods and services of our

export interests, addressing non-tariff barriers that impede our market access, and fully realizing the development dimension in the negotiations.

(d) to (e) Negotiating objectives in agriculture, and strategies to achieve them, have been developed based on analytical work by research institutions such as the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) and the Centre for WTO Studies. An Expert Group on Agriculture consisting of eminent agro-economists has been meeting from time to time to provide guidance in the agriculture negotiations. Consultations are also held with Governments of States and Union Territories at officials and/or Ministerial levels. These processes are intensified depending on the exigencies of WTO negotiations. The Government also works closely with other like-minded countries to build issue based coalitions, such as the G-20 on Agriculture and the G-33 on Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanism.

Strategy for WTO meeting at Hong Kong

975. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has finalized its strategy for the WTO Ministerial level talks scheduled to take place in Hong Kong, especially with regard to our approach to tariff reduction, reduction in subsidies in developing countries, trade distorting domestic support by developed countries in the agricultural sector, TRIPS on account of public health, etc.;

(b) if so, whether a consensus is also being tried to be evolved in such vital matters with leading political parties; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) The Government has a two-pronged strategy to ensure that its core concerns and interest continue to be adequately addressed in the ongoing WTO negotiations under the Doha Work Programme as they proceed from one stage to another. On the domestic front, the Government maintains an active dialogue with different sections of stakeholders, including the political parties, to develop India's position on issues under discussion at the WTO, including